

VZCZCXRO9118
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #1281/01 1700824
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 190824Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9927
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0382
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0383
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001281

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: THE BEAUTICIAN AND THE BRIGIDIER - NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY BIOGRAPHIES (PART I)

REF: ABUJA 01252

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Classified By: Political Counselor Russell J. Hanks for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: This cable provides biographical details for selected Nigerian National Assembly (NASS) members. Top leaders of the sixth NASS include Senate President David Mark, Speaker of the House of Representatives Patricia Etteh, and Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu. They are all People's Democratic Party (PDP) members who supported former President Obasanjo's third term agenda; their allegiance to Obasanjo, while politically expedient at present, may come back to haunt them later in their terms. End Summary.

SENATE PRESIDENT - DAVID ALCHENU BONAVENTURE MARK

¶2. (U) David Mark, PDP Senator from Benue State, is a retired army Brigadier General and third term member of the Nigerian Senate. A former telecommunications engineer, Mark was prominent during the military dictatorship of Ibrahim Babangida in the 1980s and early 1990s, serving as military administrator of Niger State and Federal Communications Minister under Babangida.

¶3. (C) Mark's military and political life is marred with controversy. A Babangida loyalist, he was implicated as a figure that encouraged Babangida to annul the 1993 elections won by Mashood Abiola. He is also accused of having used his military position to accumulate illicit wealth. As Senator, he remains close to former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who is rumored to have secured the Senate Presidency on Mark's behalf as a reward for Mark's staunch support of Obasanjo's failed third term bid in the National Assembly in mid-2006 (reftel). Mark's recent senatorial election was plagued by irregularities and his opponent is mounting a serious challenge to the outcome in the Benue electoral tribunal.

¶4. (C) Comment: Mark is described as a decisive leader whose acidic comments on national issues and arrogant behavior towards his colleagues may hinder his effectiveness as a consensus builder. Examples of Mark's strong statements on policy issues include his assertion that soldiers are better

trained to manage Nigerian affairs than civilians and his comment that the "telephone was not meant for the poor" in response to Nigeria's high telephone charges during his tenure as Communications Minister.

¶5. (U) Mark was born in 1948 (some sources cite 1947) in Otukpo, the cultural headquarters of the Idoma ethnic group, one of the minority tribes of the North Central Zone. A career soldier, he attended the Nigerian Defense Academy (NDA) in Kaduna State from 1967 to 1970, Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria State, and the US Marines Staff College from 1979 to 1980. He held several military positions from 1970 to 1993 when he was forcefully retired in 1993 by military dictator Sani Abacha. He has been married four times.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES -
PATRICIA OLUBUNMI ETTEH

¶6. (U) Patricia Etteh is the first female Speaker of the House in Nigeria's history. A third term Representative from the Southwest district of Ogun State, she was first elected to the House in 1999. Etteh originally belonged to the opposition Alliance for Democracy (AD) party, but in 2003 crossed over the PDP. She has held several House committee positions and served as Minority Whip.

¶7. (C) Etteh's won the race for House Speaker without much controversy or opposition. Like Mark, her support of Obasanjo's failed third term bid helped to secure the endorsement of PDP hierarchy, of which Obasanjo is head. Furthermore, Etteh's candidacy had the help of PDP zoning arrangements allocating the House Speaker position to the Southwest zone, from which Obasanjo hails and retains

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political influence.

¶8. (C) Comment: While Etteh is not associated with any scandals or controversies and is an experienced legislator in a House dominated by new members, her closeness to Obasanjo, and subsequently her perceived lack of independence amongst her colleagues, may limit her effectiveness as Speaker.

¶9. (U) Etteh was born in 1953 and holds a diploma in law from the University of Abuja. She is a beautician and operated a beauty parlor in Oyo state prior to her election to the National Assembly. A Yoruba from the Southwest zone, she is married to a man from the South-south and has two children.

DEPUTY SENATE PRESIDENT - IKE EKWERENMADU

¶10. (U) Enugu Senator Ike Ekwerenmadu was elected unanimously to the post of Deputy Senate President. The PDP named Ekwerenmadu as its consensus candidate from the Southeast zone in a move to appease the PDP Southeast caucus, who had claimed that the PDP's National Assembly leadership zoning arrangement marginalized the Igbo ethnic group. Like Mark and Etteh, Ekwerenmadu supported Obasanjo's third term agenda.

¶11. (U) Ekwerenmadu was first elected to the Senate in 2003 and drew support from former Enugu State Governor (and current Senator) Chimaroke Nnamani, who is under investigation for corruption by the Electoral and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Ekwerenmadu previously served as Governor Nnamani's Chief of Staff, as Secretary to the Government of Enugu State, and as a local government council chairman. He previously served as chair of the Senate Committee on Housing and Urban Development and as a member of the Committee on Judiciary, Internal Affairs, and Independent

National Electoral Commission (INEC).

¶12. (U) Ekwerenmadu was born on May 12, 1962 and holds a masters degree from the University of Nigeria at Nsukka. Prior to entering politics he worked as a legal practitioner. He is married and has four children.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) The top tiers of the leadership of the sixth NASS are dominated by Obasanjo loyalists who supported the former President's third term agenda. While their allegiance to Obasanjo may be politically expedient at present, it may come back to haunt them later in their terms as their fellow Assembly members test these leaders' independence from the PDP machine.
CAMPBELL